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REPORT BY VIRGIL BERGER
PEKING, NOV 17 (REUTERS)---MRS MARY DOWNEY LEFT

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BY AIR TODAY FOR CANTON ON HER WAY HOME TO THE UNITED STATES AFTER VISITING HER SON JOHN, SERVING A LIFE SENTENCE IN A COMMUNIST CHINESE PRISON ON ESPIONAGE CHARGES.

MRS DOWNEY, WEARING A BLACK COAT, LOOKED VISIBLY MOVED AS SHE BOARDED A BRITISH-BUILT VISCOUNT AIRLINER WITH HER YOUNGER SON, WILLIAM, ON THE FIRST LEG OF A JOURNEY HALF-WAY AROUND THE WORLD TO HER HOME IN NEW BRITAIN, CONN.

HEARD HER LAY HER FOURTH VISIT HERE SINCE 1958 AND 16 HOURS CONVERSATION WITH HER 34-YEAR-OLD SON IN A PRISON WAITING ROOM ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF PEKING.

WILLIAM, A NEW YORK LAWYER, SAID HIS OLDER BROTHER

LOOKED "FINE AND IN GOOD SPIRITS" AT THEIR LAST TWO-HOUR MEETING THIS MORNING.

"HE'S PUT ON SOME WEIGHT DURING OUR VISIT HERE WITH ALL THE ICECREAM AND PASTRIES WE BROUGHT HIM," WILLIAM SAID.

GREY-HAIRED MRS DOWNEY, A SCHOOL TEACHER BACK IN CONNECTICUT, WARMLY THANKED A CHINESE RED CROSS WORKER WHO ACTED AS HER GUIDE AND INTERPRETER BEFORE SHE BOARDED THE PLANE.

THE RED CROSS WORKER HELPED THE DOWNEYS WITH THEIR DAILY SHOPPING FOR GOODS TO BRING TO JOHN IN PRISON.

THE DOWNEYS WERE UNABLE TO GET AN INTERVIEW WITH CHINESE GOVERNMENT OR JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES TO PLEAD FOR AN EARLY RELEASE FOR JOHN DOWNEY.

BUT SENIOR CHINESE RED CROSS OFFICIALS REMINDED THE DOWNEYS OF THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT'S "GENERAL POLICY OF LENIENCY AND EARLY RELEASE FOR GOOD BEHAVIOUR."

WILLIAM SAID THEY HAD BEEN TOLD THERE WAS NO PROSPECT "NOW OR IN THE NEAR FUTURE" FOR THE RELEASE OF JOHN,

CAPTURED IN 1952 DURING THE KOREAN WAR WHEN HE WAS A CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE FOR THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT.

IN THE SAME JAIL WITH JOHN DOWNEY IS RICHARD FECTEAU OF LYNN, MASS., WHO IS SERVING A 20-YEAR SENTENCE FOR CRIMES AGAINST THE STATE.

ALTHOUGH PRISON REGULATIONS PREVENTED DOWNEY FROM SEEING FECTEAU, HE SHARED THE GIFTS OF CIGARETTES, BOOKS, PASTRIES, CANDY, ICECREAM, AND CLOTHING HIS FAMILY BROUGHT.

MRS DOWNEY, A WIDOW, SAID HER 10-DAY VISIT HAD BEEN VERY WORTHWHILE.

"IT MEANS A LOT TO ME, AND IT MEANS A LOT TO JOHN," SHE SAID.

SHE SAID SHE HAD SPENT MOST OF HER TIME SHOPPING AND VISITING HER SON AND HAD NOT DONE MUCH SIGHTSEEING AS SHE HAD SEEN MOST OF PEKING ON PREVIOUS VISITS.

SHE SAID SHE FOUND HER SON IN GOOD HEALTH.

THE RULES GOVERNING HER VISIT BARRED ANY DISCUSSION OF HIS CASE OR PRISON LIFE BUT SHE LEARNED HE WAS GETTING PLENTY OF EXERCISE AND READING.

SHE FOUND HIM WELL-INFORMED ON BOTH WORLD EVENTS AND GOINGS ON FROM THE UNITED STATES.

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